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THE 148th PLENARY SESSION

The 148th Plenary Session of the Economic and Social Committee of the European Communities was held in Brussels on 27 and 28 April 1977. The Session was presided over by the Committee's Chairman, Mr Basil de FERRANTI.

The debate on the European Social Fund was attended by Mr Henk VREDELING, Vice-President of the Commission. The debate on a Community nuclear safety code was attended by Mr Guido BRUNNER, who is a member of the Commission.

1. European Social Fund

Communication from the Commission to the Council in Connection with the Review of the Rules governing the Tasks and Operations of the European Social Fund.

Gist of the Commission's Communication

The Commission's proposals have a twofold aim, viz. :

- a) Better adjustment of Fund intervention to employment requirements and concentration of action on the most pressing Community problems, and
- b) Increased effectiveness of the Fund's assistance.

a) Adjustment to employment requirements

When the Fund was reformed in 1971, it was decided that its interventions would fall into two broad categories. The first, called Article 4 interventions, can take place when the employment situation in specific areas, which the Council has to define, is affected or in danger of being affected by Community policies. Examples are agriculture, textiles and migrant workers. The second, called Article 5 interventions, can take place, without any further Council decision, to help in the struggle against unemployment and long-term underemployment of a structural character, especially at regional level.

Given the budgetary limits, the Fund cannot hope to solve all the employment problems in the Community so it is all the more necessary that the Fund's aid should be more concentrated than in the past. Hence the Commission's new proposals aim to put a greater emphasis on aid in favour of regions with chronic unemployment problems and introduce the possibility of a variation in the Fund's rate of intervention from 50 to 65% for a limited number of regions, to be defined by the Council on a proposal from the Commission, which are characterized by a particularly serious and prolonged imbalance in employment or by a decline in one or several economic sectors of vital importance. Emphasis will also be placed on regional aspects of schemes to aid specific sectors of the economy (Article 4 interventions).

The Commission wants to put more emphasis in future on Article 4 than on Article 5 interventions because they enable the aid of the Social Fund to be directed more precisely to those sectors of the economy and regions which need it most. Therefore,

the Commission proposes to delete the clause which states that at least 50% of the Fund's resources should be spent on Article 5 interventions.

However, the Commission also wishes to emphasize that in implementing these aims, it will not only continue the Article 5 regional interventions, but it will try also to accentuate the regional aspects of the Article 4 operations in such a way that the regional impact is no less than it is at present.

The Commission will verify each year in its Annual Report on the activities of the Social Fund, the regional impact of the Social Fund interventions. Whenever it appears that this impact is not sufficient, the Commission will take the appropriate measures in the framework of the annual budgetary proposals, the annual guidelines or proposals under Article 4.

At the same time, it is proposed to introduce certain measures to remove or diminish restrictions which at present affect the assistance which certain categories of workers can receive from the Fund. These changes will ensure greater scope from the Fund to help women find new jobs, and self-employed persons to be trained to run small craft undertakings. The existing measures to help migrants to be trained and integrated into the domestic labour force and young people to find a first job are to be prolonged.

b) Aids to be made more effective

The complexity of the current aid schemes and administrative procedures is one of the main reasons for the delays that

deprive the Fund of its effectiveness. For example, according to the current rules, assistance from the Fund must be granted on the basis of the real cost of the retraining or resettlement operation. But this involves, in the checking and payment procedures, a knowledge of the real cost actually incurred in the case of every individual covered by the operation. The new proposals in this area aim at a simplification of the aids system without involving too great a departure from the principle of real costs. The following are among the changes which it is proposed to introduce :

- a system of fixed unit costs, to be determined by the Commission on the basis of data supplied by the Member States, would replace aid granted on the basis of real costs;
- the presentation of the majority of applications for aid by Member States grouped according to area of intervention instead of numerous individual applications. This will make it easier to assess Member States' policies of employment in the areas of Fund intervention. Individual applications will continue to be allowed but should be much fewer than at present;
- approval at the start of the exercise of a major portion of the budget, particularly for grouped projects; this should allow Member States to estimate in good time the amount of aid that can be counted on from the Fund;
- granting of advances as soon as operations have begun and stringent verification procedures in close collaboration with the Member States to ensure satisfactory completion before the balance is paid;
- establishment of a follow-up procedure for operations and control of effectiveness of aids.

Possibility of new aids

The proposals outlined above will be limited in immediate scope to Fund intervention in support of aids centred essentially on vocational training and the geographical and vocational mobility of the labour force. But going beyond the direct application of certain rules, these proposals contain openings for the future, thus :

- the possibility for the Council, on a proposal from the Commission, to apply new aids extending beyond the field of vocational training and mobility. These could be aids (at an intervention rate of the Fund of 35%) for the maintenance or creation of employment or other types of intervention to enable workers to get stable jobs in economically healthy sectors. They could also be, analogous to existing European Coal and Steel Community measures, aids for the maintenance of incomes for a determined period, of persons who have lost their jobs or whose employment has been reduced or suspended and who are waiting for training or jobs;
- the possibility to modify, as necessary, the basic decision and to entrust new tasks to the Fund.

Such new aids and tasks could be defined, for example, in debate in the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee, the Standing Committee on Employment or the Tripartite Conference.

Gist of the Opinion

The Economic and Social Committee adopted unanimously its Opinion on this proposal.

As regards the scope of the proposed changes, the Committee commends the Commission for submitting proposal which it thinks will improve the Social Fund's working procedures and efficiency. The Committee doubts, however, whether these proposals can adequately deal with the social repercussions of the economic situation, which has deteriorated considerably since the Fund was first reformed in 1971.

In this respect, the Committee thinks it would have been conceivable to propose sweeping changes to the Fund's tasks here and now, and points out that it has repeatedly requested that the Fund be assigned a more important role in employment policy and that its activities should become more a part of the Community's structural policies.

In its general comments, the Committee deals more specifically with (a) the Fund's inadequate resources at the moment, (b) the need to synchronize the activities of the various EEC financial instruments and, in particular, the activities of the Regional Fund and the Social Fund, though care should be taken to ensure that the Social Fund is not stripped of its specific role and is not made to play second fiddle to instruments of a more political and economic nature, (c) the respective roles of the various bodies with powers in the employment sector, (d) the priority areas of intervention of the Fund, (e) the Fund's activities in the area of vocational training and retraining and (f) the need to back up these activities by creating adequate jobs simultaneously.

In its specific comments, the Committee, while approving most of the Commission's proposed changes, especially the one



Commission Vice-President Henk VREDELING (right) during the
debate on the European Social Fund.

concerning larger percentage contributions to help the least developed regions, states that :

- the Commission's indefinite postponement of new types of aid in areas other than vocational training and labour mobility is regrettable;
- its endorsement of the proposed deletion of paragraph 2(2) of Article 9 (predetermined allocation of appropriations between Articles 4 and 5) is conditional on the non-reduction of the Fund's regional impact and structural role and checks to this effect at the annual report stage;
- grouping applications for aid and submitting these applications in advance - a method which the Committee approves in principle - is fraught with risks, since it might increase the influence of national authorities and thus make for adoption of a quota system;
- care should be taken to ensure that annual guidelines for the order of priority schemes eligible for assistance from the Fund do not stop the Fund reacting more quickly than in the past to changes on the labour market;
- the two sides of industry must be involved more closely in the various stages in the granting and implementation of aid from the Fund.

The Committee based its Opinion on material prepared by its Section for Social Questions under the chairmanship of Mr HOUTHUYS - Belgium - Workers. The Rapporteur was Mr LAVAL - France - Workers.

Statement by Mr VREDELING, Vice-President of the Commission

In the course of the debate on the Review of the European Social Fund, Mr VREDELING, Vice-President of the Commission, expressed his gratitude that the Committee was producing its Opinion with such speed. This would enable it to be used by the European Parliament, which would debate the Commission's proposals in the next stage. The Council would like to have the broad guidelines for the

Social Fund ready by June. The review of the Social Fund today was entirely different from that which had taken place in 1971, Mr VREDENING said, when the situation had been characterized by economic growth. The Social Fund then had been mainly required to act in the field of vocational training - for this part of its function, 90% of the fund was used, while only 10% was needed to help to cover people moving from one job to another. This was adequate for the time.

It certainly was not adequate for present conditions. The Commission had proposed that procedures for granting aid should now be changed and a more effective methodology for dealing with applications to the Social Fund should be applied. It would be an oversimplification to suggest that the application of Article 4 is purely economic and the application of Article 5 is purely structural in intent. What we propose is to use Article 4 in fighting unemployment by placing a greater stress on its use and using Article 5 to help in what is known as "the classical regions", namely those mainly relying on agriculture. Under Article 4 we provide assistance to areas such as the textile sector and agriculture and to help special categories such as young workers, or migrants, subject to special guidelines, he said.

In the application of Article 4, priority will be given to structurally backward regions, say southern France or Northern Ireland, vulnerable regions which exist in all Member States. For really vulnerable regions, we envisage that the Social Fund contribution should be increased from 50% to 65% of the counterpart contribution, an increase of 15%. If it were to be accepted by the Council,

it would mean a modest advance. Hitherto, the Social Fund had been characterized by its emphasis on vocational training. If our proposal were to be approved it could become a real European Social Fund by way of creating jobs. To achieve these aims we have been favouring a step-by-step approach, well aware that we cannot achieve our objectives at one stroke. For this purpose, for a basic change in structural approach, the Commission proposes to make its aims clear in proposals which will be presented to the Economic and Social Committee, to the European Parliament and to the Council.

Mr VREDELING underlined that the regional priorities under Article 5 would not be neglected. On the contrary, a number of regions could benefit from the 65% proposal. He would work closely together with Mr GIOLITTI, Member of the Commission responsible for Regional Development, in this field. The proposals envisaged a system parallel to the one used by the European Coal and Steel Community, namely to maintain the workers' income in cases of short-time working, in periods of waiting for jobs, in fact, to provide a direct contribution towards aid for the unemployed. This was a new facet which the Commission wanted to add to the Social Fund's activities. It was true that this was an ambitious project and that it needed large financial backing. Present finances were paltry in view of the tremendous need : the Fund disposed of 600 million u.a., compared to the 1,200 million u.a. which are being spent on this purpose. Certainly, the Ministers of Finance would be reluctant to make increases of that order, but some increase of the Social Fund would be necessary. It was the Commission's role to ensure that the money would be spent in the most useful way and he hoped that the Council would adopt the Commission's proposals now being discussed in the Committee.

2. Sewage Sludge

Proposal for a Council Decision for adopting a Research Programme in the Field of Treatment and Use of Sewage Sludge

Gist of the Proposal

The Commission proposes a concerted research action in the field of treatment and use of sewage sludge. It will cost an estimated total of 140,000 u.a. on the Community budget.

The Commission is to be assisted by a Management Committee (coordination Committee). Each participating state will nominate one representative who may, if necessary, be accompanied by experts.

The research work covers :

1. Sludge stabilization and odour problems;
2. Dewatering of sludge;
3. Problems related to sludge characterization;
4. Environmental problems related to land use of sewage sludge.

Gist of the Opinion

The Economic and Social Committee, adopted unanimously the Opinion which had been approved previously.

The programme is designed to coordinate research work in the Member States on sewage sludge involving expenditures of 6 million u.a. The programme is to run for three years. It will

cost an estimated total of 140,000 u.a. on the Community budget. It covers research on :

- sludge stabilization and odour problems;
- dewatering of sludge;
- problems related to sludge characterization;
- environmental problems related to land-usage-agriculture.

The Committee believes that coordination of this work will be of great value. Specifically, the proposed Management Committee should prove to be very useful in pooling resources and exchanging information. It also believes that the Management Committee should devote itself to minimizing duplication in research work.

The Committee hopes that, as soon as precise conclusions can be drawn from the R & D work, the Commission will follow these up with recommendations to the Member States. It also believes that the Community should encourage the Member States in their programmes for the construction of sewage treatment plant.

The Committee feels that more emphasis should be placed on sludge as a potential resource rather than as a waste product. It welcomes the fact that research will focus on the processing of raw sludge so that it can be used both as economically as possible and with minimal adverse effects on agricultural land and for land reclamation. If sludge is to find an outlet in agriculture, it is essential to secure its acceptability to farmers. The Committee suggests that there should be closer liaison and information-exchange

between farm organizations and the authorities responsible for sludge disposal. It calls for close coordination between the programme and the Community's research work on farm slurry.

The Committee based its Opinion on material prepared by its Section for Energy and Nuclear Questions under the chairmanship of Mr MILLER - United Kingdom - Employers. The Rapporteur was Sir John PEEL - United Kingdom - Various Interests.

3. GATT Negotiations

The Economic and Social Committee adopted by a large majority (one vote against), its Opinion on

The GATT Multilateral Trade Negotiations.

At a time when the GATT negotiations are about to enter a decisive phase the Committee asks that the Community adopt a pragmatic attitude in the talks, bearing in mind the real world economic situation and the aftermath of the energy crisis.

The situation is marked by :

- a deficit in the Community's balance of trade, especially with the United States and Japan, reflecting a certain deterioration in the EEC's competitive position; and
- the need to give increased priority to jobs.

The Committee feels that the principle of free trade should be supplemented by some form of machinery to organize international trade.

First of all the Community must aim at getting measures taken to avoid exchange rates being changed too often or too sharply and thus jeopardizing the economic and social equilibrium of the different signatories to the GATT. This means not only laying down a number of monetary rules for world trade but also beefing up the GATT's role as a conciliator and arbiter on trade matters, so as to ensure that these rules are applied and that actual situations are taken into account.

While the Committee recognizes the need to open up the Community market to developing countries' goods, it rejects the idea of LDCs being allowed general and permanent exemptions from the rules applying to the other contracting parties to the GATT.

On the technical side, the Committee calls for a standardization followed by a reduction of customs duties, with a floor of 5% or so for duties on manufactured goods. As regards farming, the Committee considers that the Common Agricultural Policy is not a matter for negotiation like the other sectors.

As far as non-tariff barriers are concerned, the Committee insists that alongside tariff reductions a way should be found to standardize definitions of dutiable value and certain customs procedures, and that the subsidies issue should be resolved. Subsidies should only be met with countervailing duties if they have a prejudicial effect on trade.

Finally, the Committee considers that the safeguard clause provided for in GATT Article XIX should be used selectively and that the Community should follow United States practice and have a procedure for vetting the results of negotiations before putting them into effect. Such a procedure would include consulting the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee.

The Committee based its Opinion on material supplied by its Section for External Relations under the chairmanship of Mr CARSTENS - Denmark - Employers. The Rapporteur was Mr EVAIN - France - Employers.

4. Electronic Traffic Aids - Major Roads

Proposal for a Council Decision subscribing, on behalf of the Community, to a Joint Declaration of Intent to Implement a European Project in the Field of Transport on the Subject : "Electronic Traffic Aids on Major Roads".

Gist of the Proposal

The proposal seeks to involve the Community in a European research into electronic traffic aids on major roads.

The programme has been drawn up by the Community itself and eleven European nations, including six EEC Member States. The countries involved are Belgium, Germany, France, UK, Italy, Netherlands, Austria, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland and Yugoslavia.

The aim is to establish a standardized system providing road-users with the same service throughout the participating countries.

Research covers :

- Traffic information requirements;
- Incident detection systems;
- The development of prototype equipment for forecasting and determining weather conditions;
- Systems for voice communication with drivers;
- In-vehicle visual communication - advisability and methods;
- The development of roadside variable signs;
- Structure and content of messages in the various languages;
- Traffic management problems and the infrastructure needed to implement an effective system, incorporating the techniques developed by the various working parties.

Gist of the Opinion

The Economic and Social Committee adopted unanimously its Opinion on this proposal.

The Committee broadly welcomes the moves to implement European research into electronic traffic aids on major roads.

The ultimate objective is to create a standardized European system. There can be no doubt about the importance of this issue in view of the fact that international motor traffic in the Community has increased by a factor of 7.5 in a decade.

Despite substantial investment in the field of motor traffic, the situation as regards road capacity and traffic flow has deteriorated in recent years. The proposed project is therefore calculated to make a significant contribution to road safety and to more rational use of traffic infrastructures. The Committee consequently endorses the Commission proposal that the President of the Council should be authorized to designate the persons empowered to sign the Declaration of Intent on behalf of the Community.

The Committee based its Opinion on material prepared by its Section for Transport and Communications under the chairmanship of Mr HOFFMANN - Germany - Workers. The Rapporteur was Mr RENAUD - France - Employers.

In addition, the Committee drew up the following studies :

5. Study on Portugal

The Economic and Social Committee adopted unanimously its Study on

Relations between the EEC and Portugal.

The Study does not take a stand on Portugal's application for membership. It is, however, intended as a modest contribution to the preparations for the country's possible membership.

The Committee's Section for External Relations will also gladly be of any assistance to the Commission when the time comes for the latter to draw up an Opinion, under Article 237 of the Treaty on Portugal's application.

The Section's work, started at the beginning of 1976, has yielded a detailed analysis of the economic and social situation in Portugal. A delegation from the Section visited Portugal and had prolonged discussions with representatives of employers' and business organizations, agricultural producers and the Intersindical as well as with the people responsible for Portugal's economic policy. This visit familiarized the members of the Section with the needs and want of the various sectors in that country and induced them to make a number of suggestions.

During this fact-finding visit, the Committee's delegation was received by the Portuguese Prime Minister, Dr Mario SOARES, who in turn visited the Committee last month and informed its Chairman, Mr de FERRANTI, how satisfied he was at the interest shown by the Committee in his country's problems.

The Study starts by noting that political and economic stability in Portugal has improved to such a point that the EEC can now contemplate a campaign to alert Community business circles to investment openings and conditions in Portugal.

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The Study also suggests consultations between interested parties in the Community and the Portuguese authorities on the subject of Portugal's foreign investment code (now under review).

With regard to Portuguese exports to the EEC, the Community should first attempt to help the Portuguese to adapt their production to foreign demand.

The Study proposes the setting up of a standing liaison committee - made up of Portuguese and delegates from the EEC Member States and Institutions - to promote cooperation between business, labour and professional interests in the various sectors of the Portuguese and EEC economies. This committee is needed as an essential back-up to effective cooperation between all economic sectors. Its terms of reference should be left very wide.

In the same context the Study mentions the Business Cooperation Centre (expressing the hope that Portuguese firms would be able to make use of this Centre's services).

The Committee was informed of the severe shortage of executive staff and skilled workers throughout the Portuguese economy. The EEC could provide constructive help here by allowing Portuguese nationals, wherever possible, to take part in national and Community vocational training schemes at the Community's expense.

In the social security sector, the EEC could help by supplying comprehensive information to the Portuguese authorities, trade unions and employers' organizations about social security schemes

in the Community and in the individual Member States. The help of the EEC trade union and trade organizations would also be most useful here.

In the field of agriculture, adjustment of Portugal's production to the EEC market requires a thorough knowledge of the rules of the CAP and of the surplus situation with regard to some products, etc. The Community authorities and farming organizations in both the EEC and Portugal have everything to gain from launching an information campaign to encourage a trend towards natural complementarity between Portuguese and EEC agricultural production, and compatibility between their policies.

In addition, the EEC Commission should consider the possibility of giving special priority to financial aid for projects which could help to bring about a quick reduction in Portugal's food imports.

The Committee based its Opinion on material prepared by its Section for External Relations under the chairmanship of Mr CARSTENS - Denmark - Employers. The Rapporteur was Mr STARATZKE Germany - Employers.

6. Study on Nuclear Safety Code

The Economic and Social Committee, adopted unanimously with 1 abstention its Study on a Community Nuclear Safety Code.

A nuclear safety code, binding all Member States of the European Community to apply uniform standards, was proposed by the Economic and Social Committee at its Plenary Session on 28 April in Brussels. This set of minimum rules, which gives top priority

to the safety of nuclear workers and the general public, would cover all activities in the nuclear sector :

- uranium mining and fuel preparation;
- present and future reactor types;
- nuclear research installations;
- storage and transport of irradiated fuel and waste;
- reprocessing of irradiated fuel;
- radioactive waste disposal;
- decommissioning of nuclear plants.

The code should deal with problems as criteria for site selection, licensing procedures, reactor safety, physical protection of nuclear installations, rules limiting the discharge of radioactive effluents, safeguards against thermal pollution and standards for the safety and protection of workers. A central body for nuclear safety should be established in each Member State.

Many of the decisions concerning the risks associated with nuclear energy are more often of a social and moral nature than a technical one. The Committee therefore stresses the need to involve the general public. There must be ready access to reliable and comprehensive information. Major decisions such as those on the siting of nuclear power stations must be submitted to elected bodies and to the general public for their views.

The code would seek to coordinate effectively the nuclear safety measures taken by the Member States. While the European Commission has already achieved sound progress on nuclear safety using its existing powers, the Committee recommended that these powers should



On the right, Mr Guido BRUNNER, member of the Commission, taking part in the debate on the nuclear safety code.

now be extended substantially. The basic objective of the code should be to allow the optimum development of the nuclear industry from the point of view of safety, thus promoting the use of nuclear energy for the benefit of society as a whole.

The Committee based its Opinion on material prepared by its Section for Energy and Nuclear Questions under the chairmanship of Mr MILLER - United Kingdom - Employers. The Rapporteur was Mr BONETY - France - Workers.

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Statement by Commissioner BRUNNER

Mr Guido BRUNNER, Member of the Commission, took part in the discussion on a Community nuclear safety code.

He said that it was impossible for any politician to speak about nuclear energy without being self-critical. European politicians and the Community were no exception. He reproached himself and the Commission for the fact that the ordinary European citizen was not properly informed about how dependent Europe would be on energy imports by the mid-eighties. Mr BRUNNER depicted the harsh constraints Europe would be facing by then. It had to strike the right balance between various energy sources, but would still not be able to break out of the vicious circle of expensive and insecure fuel imports in any area whatsoever. He announced that the Community had adopted a 384 million dollar research programme in principle only

a few weeks ago. Reactor safety research would be getting 85.7 million, plutonium research 43.6 million and research on nuclear waste 23.4 million.

The lack of information was also partly responsible for the aversion of many people to nuclear energy. The man in the street must be involved in decision-making, and therefore the Commission was intending to organize public nuclear energy hearings in the Community. The Economic and Social Committee should be represented at these hearings, Mr BRUNNER continued. It was not possible to "sell" nuclear energy by presenting it as the sole solution. There had to be a variety of energy sources and not just one source. Nuclear energy was only one necessary component of the energy system in the long term. It was impossible to see nuclear energy in the right light and judge correctly the opportunities and risks it presented, if it was not viewed in conjunction with other sources, such as coal, oil, solar energy and geothermal energy, and the opportunities and risks they presented.

As far as oil was concerned, there was no escaping the fact that Europe did not have enough. Even in the eighties, North Sea oil would cover only about 10% of our requirements. It was necessary to use Europe's energy resources sparingly and build up reserves. We could not burn up the coal that was the rightful heritage of our children and our children's children.

All our efforts must be geared to optimum security, minimum environmental pollution and rational utilization of all the energy sources at our disposal. This also included nuclear energy.

Europe's problem was that it could not select or change its geographical location and its geological structure.

There were alternatives to nuclear energy, but these would mean sacrifices, restrictions and repercussions on employment. Were the citizens of Europe prepared to make these sacrifices?

People should not say "What's the purpose of any further discussion?" or "What's the use of all this criticism?". It was all very useful and had already proved so. In all energy sectors, including nuclear energy, safety standards and technical safety measures were constantly being improved. We were learning, particularly under the pressure of public opinion and discussions such as the Committee had just held.

II

NEW REQUESTS FOR OPINIONS

In April, the Council asked the Committee for an
Opinion on a :

Proposal for a Council Regulation (EEC) amending
Regulation Nos. 816/70, 2893/74 and 817/70 as
regards the Maximum Total Sulphur Dioxide Content
of Wines Other Than Liqueur Wines.

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME OF WORK

Plenary Session of May 1977

Opinions drawn up by request

- Protection of Workers against Vinyl Chloride
- Equal Treatment as regards Social Security
- Protection of Birds

Opinions drawn up on the Committee's own initiative

- Industrial Change
- Action Programme for Consumers (Additional Opinion)

Studies

- Employment in Agriculture
- Relations between the Industrialized and Developing Countries.

Plenary Session of June 1977

Opinions drawn up by request

- Economic Situation
- Social Situation
- Door-to-door Selling
- Data Processing
- Pleasure Boats
- Aid for Financing Coal Stocks
- Electronic Aids for Use on Roads
- Railway Companies' Accounts

Opinions drawn up on the Committee's own initiative

- Farm Prices (additional Opinion)
- East-West Transport (Part One)

Studies

- Agreements between the Community and Countries in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean

Plenary Session of September 1977

Opinions drawn up by request

- Defective Products
- Commercial Agents
- Double Taxation
- New Regional Fund
- Alcohol

Opinions drawn up on the Committee's own initiative

- Small- and Medium-sized Businesses

Subsequent Plenary Sessions

Opinions drawn up by request

- Green Paper on Worker Participation

Opinions drawn up on the Committee's own initiative

- 1976 Regional Fund Report

Studies

- Alignment of Taxes
- Relations between the Community and Greece

IV

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

1. Official Visit by Committee Chairman to the Joint Research Centre at Ispra

Mr Basil de FERRANTI, the President of the Economic and Social Committee, and Mr Delfo DELFINI, the Secretary-General, made an official visit to the Community's Joint Research Centre (JRC) at Ispra on the occasion of the meeting of the Energy Section of the Committee, under the chairmanship of Mr Norman MILLER.

The Director General of the Joint Research Centre, Mr VILLANI, gave an exposé of the result of the last meeting of the Research Council concerning the pluri-annual programme which it adopted, amounting to 350 m.u.a. for the years 1977-1980. He characterized this as a "significant vote of confidence in the future of the JRC", and he hoped that "the decision marks the beginning of a more enlightened approach by the Member States to Community research in general".

Mr de FERRANTI emphasized that Community research responds to the real needs of its citizens. He particularly welcomed the new emphasis of Community work on energy (nuclear safety, solar energy, hydrogen), environment and resources.

Mr de FERRANTI also pointed out that the Community and JRC could play a role in research which far exceeded the size of its financial effort. By acting as focal point for information-

exchange and the coordination of national research and development, it would be possible to ensure that the human and financial research resources of the Community were deployed with optimum efficiency.

2. Official Visit to Rome by the Committee's Chairman,
Mr Basil de FERRANTI

The Committee's Chairman, Mr Basil de FERRANTI, made an official visit to Rome on 21-22 April 1977.

Mr de FERRANTI was accompanied by Vice-Chairmen, Mr van GREUNSVEN and Mr BERNIS and the Secretary-General, Mr DELFINI. The party was received by the President of the Council, Mr ANDREOTTI, the Minister of Agriculture, Mr MARCORA, the Minister for Industry, Mr DONAT-CATTIN, the Minister of Labour Mr ANSELMINI, the Treasury Minister, Mr STAMMATI, and the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mr FOSCHI gave a meal in honour of the delegation from the Committee. The Committee's delegation also met the Bureau of the National Council for the Economy and for Labour of Italy (CNEL), led by its Chairman, Mr Bruno STORTI, and on Friday discussed with certain members of the CNEL a number of subjects on which the Committee had recently given an opinion, such as the economic and social situation of the Community, the common agricultural policy in the international context and the Community's regional policy.

Mr de FERRANTI also had an audience with the Pope.

The object of Mr de FERRANTI's visit was to make an initial official contact with members of the Italian Government who are directly involved with the activities of the Economic and Social Committee, and to strengthen relations between the ESC and CNEL (Consiglio Nazionale dell'Economia e del Lavoro).

In his meetings with members of Government, Mr de FERRANTI sketched the pre-occupations and objects of the Economic and Social Committee. Issues falling within the remit of each individual Minister were discussed as the occasion arose. Particular regard was paid to the latest economic and social developments in Italy, and to problems that Italy shared with the whole international community in the fields of employment, industry, agriculture and finance.

At meetings held with office-holders of CNEL, which the Italian members of the ESC also attended, the activities of the two institutions were discussed and the foundations laid for closer collaboration.

3. Committee Chairman addresses the American and Common Market Club

On Thursday April 28 1977, Mr Basil de FERRANTI, ESC Chairman, addressed the American and Common Market Club.

Mr de FERRANTI sketched the history of US-European relations before turning to the political and democratic development of Europe and the expected repercussions of direct elections to the European Parliament.

Mr de FERRANTI also spoke of the need for economic and social democracy, something that the Committee was responsible for at EEC level.

Mr de FERRANTI ended by appealing to Americans to be more sympathetic to the problems of Europe.

Resolution of the Economic and Social Committee on the Steel Industry

Having discussed the problems currently facing the steel sector at its plenary session of 28 April 1977, the Economic and Social Committee has unanimously adopted the following resolution :

- concerned by the difficulties faced by the European steel industry, and of the implications for employment,
- aware of the urgent need to tackle this situation, pending the preparation of a longer-term policy,
- convinced that these problems must be resolved within a Community framework, and in order to prevent a return to national safeguard measures,

the Economic and Social Committee urges the European Institutions to do all in their power to overcome the difficulties in question.

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MEMBERS' NEWS

Appointments

On 5 and 25 April respectively, the Council of the European Communities appointed the following members of the Committee :

- Mr Preben NIELSEN, to replace Mr Thomas NIELSEN, who had resigned;
 - Mr S.J. LAWTON, to replace Miss MACKIE, who had resigned.
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PUBLICATIONS OBTAINABLE FROM THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Periodical

- Bulletin (monthly publication)

General Documentation

- The Economic and Social Committee (leaflet) (January 1975)
- The Economic and Social Committee (April 1975)
(A descriptive brochure) 16 p.
- Annual Report (1976) 80 p. (1975) 62 p. (1974) 60 p. (1973) 64 p.
- Directory (January 1977)
(List of members) 42 p.

Opinions and Studies

- Research and Development (November 1976)
(Study) 35 p.
- Systems of education and vocational training
(August 1976) (Study) 114 p.
- Regional Policy (March 1976)
(Opinion) 11 p.
- European Union (July 1975)
(Opinion) 33 p.
- Progress Report on the Common Agricultural Policy
(February 1975) (Study) 52 p.
- The Situation of Small and Medium-sized Undertakings in the
European Community (March 1975) (Study) 69 p.